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ABSTRACT

This report describes trends related to accommodations in testing for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and summarizes the performance of accommodated LSAT takers for the 1993-1994 through 1997-1998 testing years. Data show that the number of requests for accommodated testing increased steadily from the 1994-1995 through 1996-1997 LSAT testing years, then declined for the 1997-1998 testing year. The number of approved accommodation requests declined steadily from the 1994-1995 year through the 1997-1998 testing year. Learning Disabled test takers were the largest disability classification for all testing years. Most accommodated test takers used the standard booklet rather than the large-type or Braille and cassette test booklets. The most common accommodations granted were extra rest time, extra testing time, a separate testing room, and other "small" accommodations such as use of cushion or permission to bring food or drink into the testing room. Findings indicate that while less testing time has been granted to accommodated test takers in recent years, such test takers were often still granted enough time to allow them to complete the test. The report also notes demographic characteristics of accommodated test takers. Accommodated/Extra time-test takers tended to have higher LSAT scores than the standard test takers, while test takers in Accommodated/Standard Time testing conditions tended to have lower scores. (Contains 12 figures and 7 references.) (Author/SLD)

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■ Accommodated Test Taker Trends and Performance for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT Administrations

Andrea E. Thornton
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■ Law School Admission Council
Technical Report 01-04
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Executive Summary

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) provides accommodated testing conditions for each administration of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) for those test takers with documented disabilities who are unable to take the test under standard testing conditions. The accommodations granted are tailored to the needs of the individual test taker. This report describes trends with regard to accommodated testing for the LSAT and summarizes performance of accommodated LSAT takers for the 1993–1994 through 1997–1998 testing years. Specifically, the most recent data with regard to the number and type of LSAT accommodations being requested and granted are presented, as well as the distribution of accommodation requests across the various disability classifications represented. In addition, the composition of the sample of accommodated test takers is described with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, and age, and where appropriate, compared to the standard LSAT test taking population. The LSAT performance of accommodated test takers is also summarized and compared to the standard test taking population. Finally, the performance of repeat accommodated test takers is also summarized and discussed. In some analyses, accommodated test takers are categorized with regard to testing time—those who tested with extra testing time (Accommodated/Extra Time) are considered separately from those who tested with accommodations that did not include extra testing time (Accommodated/Standard Time).

Some of the most relevant trends observed with regard to accommodated LSAT takers for the 1993–1994 through 1997–1998 testing years are as follows.

Trends with Regard to the Request and Approval of LSAT Accommodations

- The number of requests for accommodated testing conditions increased steadily from the 1994–1995 through 1996–1997 LSAT testing years, then declined for the 1997–1998 testing year.
- The number of approved accommodation requests decreased steadily from the 1994–1995 through the 1997–1998 LSAT testing years. This trend is related, at least in part, to LSAC administrative changes that have resulted in more uniform guidelines governing the approval of testing accommodations.
- Learning Disabled test takers were the largest disability classification for all testing years included in this sample.
- Most accommodated test takers used the standard test booklet rather than the large-type or Braille and cassette test booklet formats.
- The most common accommodations granted were extra rest time, extra testing time, a separate testing room, and "other" small accommodations such as the use of a seat cushion or permission to bring food or drink into the testing room.
- A trend was observed toward granting less rather than more extra testing time. This trend corresponds directly with LSAC changes in the administration of testing accommodations.
- On average, accommodated test takers have had enough time to finish the multiple-choice sections and writing sample for all five years covered by this report, and test takers had less time left over after finishing these sections in the later testing years. This result indicates that while less extra testing time was granted in the later years, accommodated test takers were often still granted enough time to allow them to complete the test.

Demographic Trends

- There were more male than female accommodated test takers in the sample analyzed here, whereas male and female test takers tend to be approximately equally represented in the standard test taking population.
- The representation of the Caucasian subgroup was slightly higher for some of the disability categories than is typically observed for the standard test taking population, with slightly lower representation for the Neurological, Physical, and Visual and Psychological disability categories.
- For the most part, there were fewer Asian American, African American, and Hispanic test takers in the sample analyzed here than is typically observed for the standard test-taking population, with the exception of the Visual and Psychological disability categories for the African American subgroup and

the Learning Disabled category for the Hispanic subgroup. The representation of Visually and Psychologically disabled African American test takers was around 12% and the representation of Learning Disabled Hispanic test takers was around 4%, both of which are similar to the representation of these groups among the standard test-taking population.

- The representation of Canadian Aboriginal test takers among the various disability categories was high in general as compared to their very low representation within the standard test taking population, with the largest representation being within the Neurological, Physical, and Visual disability categories.

- There were more accommodated test takers represented in the older age categories than is typically observed for the standard test taking population.

Performance of Accommodated Test Takers

- Accommodated/Extra Time test takers tended to have higher LSAT scores than the standard test taking population, while Accommodated/Standard Time test takers tended to have lower LSAT scores than the standard test taking population.

Repeat Accommodated Test Takers

- Test takers who tested twice under Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions exhibited slightly higher gain scores on average than is typically observed for the standard test taking population, while those who switched from standard to Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions exhibited very high gain scores on average.

Note that the trends presented in this report are purely descriptive in nature. While trends with regard to the accommodated test taking population have been described and compared to the standard test taking population, the explanation of the underlying causes of any differences observed is beyond the scope of this report. More specifically, those included in the sample of accommodated test takers being analyzed are, in several respects, self-selected. These test takers chose to take the LSAT and to apply for accommodated testing conditions, then further self-reported their group membership with regard to such factors as gender, race/ethnicity, and age.

Introduction

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) provides accommodated testing conditions for each administration of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) for those test takers with documented disabilities who are unable to take the test under standard testing conditions. The procedures for requesting accommodated testing conditions are provided in the *LSAT/LSDAS Registration and Information Book*. The types of testing accommodations granted are tailored to meet the individual needs of test takers. Accommodations may include special formats of the test, such as large-print, Braille, or audiocassette formats. Other common modifications to the standard test administration include, but are not limited to, use of a reader, an amanuensis, a wheelchair-accessible test center, additional rest time between sections, and additional testing time (Law School Admission Council, 2000).

The purpose of this report is to describe trends with regard to accommodated testing for the LSAT, as well as to summarize the performance of accommodated LSAT takers. More specifically, this report summarizes the most recent data with regard to the number and types of LSAT accommodations being requested and granted, as well as the distribution of accommodation requests across the various disability classifications represented. In addition, the composition of the sample of accommodated test takers is described with regard to gender, ethnicity, and age, and where appropriate, compared to the standard LSAT test taking population. The LSAT performance of accommodated test takers is also summarized and compared to the standard test taking population. Finally, the performance of repeat accommodated test takers and those who switched between accommodated and standard test taking conditions is also summarized and discussed. Reports similar to this are produced regularly for the standard LSAT taking population (Dalessandro, Anthony, & Reese, 2001; Duffy, Dalessandro, Anthony, & Swygert, 2001; Schnipke, Anthony & Reese, 1998, 2000).

Description of the Accommodated Test Taker Sample

The analyses presented in this report used data from the 5,707 registrants who were approved for an accommodation for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT administrations. This sample includes all registrants who, due to a documented disability, were granted an accommodation of the standard LSAT-taking conditions regardless of whether they actually went on to take an accommodated LSAT. Eight different disability classifications are represented within this sample. These classifications are described in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Description of Disability Classifications

Classification	Description
Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	refers to a collection of symptoms that include inattention, difficulty in delaying gratification, overactivity or motor restlessness, distractibility, impulsivity, and short attention span
Hearing Impairment (HI)	any debilitating loss or distortion of hearing
Learning Disability (LD)	a varied group of disorders characterized by considerable difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities
Neurological Impairment (NI)	Impairment of the neurological system, including but not limited to paraplegia or quadriplegia, traumatic brain injury, stroke syndromes, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or nerve injury
Physical Disability (PHY)	includes a wide variety of medical/surgical conditions that affect multiple body organs and systems
Psychological Disability (PSY)	any diagnosed psychological condition, including depression, bipolar disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, specific phobias, posttraumatic stress disorder
Visual Impairment (VI)	any debilitating loss or distortion of vision
Other	usually refers to medical conditions that are not encompassed within other categories of impairment, such as diabetes

Note. Background information for the descriptions came from Spree, Risser, & Edgell, 1995; Wainapel, 1998.

Some of the analyses in this report include only those test takers who obtained an LSAT score under accommodated testing conditions. An LSAT score was available for 4,462 of the test takers who were granted an accommodation for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT administrations. In some of these analyses, accommodated test takers are categorized with regard to testing time—those who tested with extra testing time (Accommodated/Extra Time) are considered separately from those who tested with accommodations that did not include extra testing time (Accommodated/Standard Time). Of the 4,462 accommodated test takers included in this sample, 3,556 were Accommodated/Extra Time and 906 were Accommodated/Standard Time test takers.

Trends with Regard to the Request and Approval of LSAT Accommodations

As is true of the standard LSAT-taking population, certain characteristics of the accommodated test taking population have remained constant while other characteristics changed somewhat over time. This section discusses the trends that were observed with regard to the volume of accommodation requests, the approval of those requests, and the nature of the accommodations that were granted.

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Accommodation Requests and Approvals

Figure 1 summarizes the number of accommodation requests submitted, the number of accommodation requests approved, and the number of accommodated tests administered for the 1994–1995 through 1997–1998 LSAT testing years. The number of approved requests and administered accommodated tests is also included for the 1993–1994 testing year, but the number of accommodation requests is not available for that time period. This figure reveals that the number of accommodation requests increased from the 1994–1995 through the 1996–1997 testing years, and then declined for the 1997–1998 testing year. Over the same time period, the number of testing accommodations granted consistently decreased. This trend is related, at least in part, to LSAC administrative changes that led to more uniform guidelines for granting the approval of testing accommodations. The proportion of those taking an accommodated LSAT after their accommodation request was granted has remained fairly stable over the five years covered by this report.

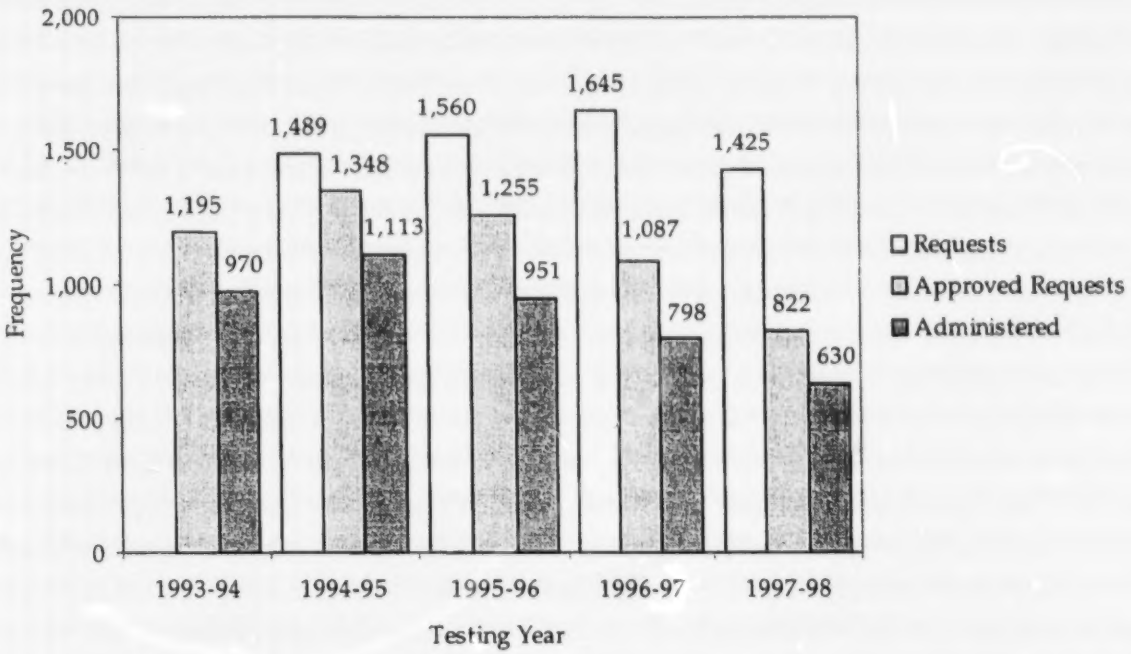

FIGURE 1. *Number of accommodated tests requested, approved, and administered by testing year*

Figure 2 describes the number of approved accommodation requests for each disability classification for each testing year. This figure clearly shows that the most common classification is Learning Disabled for the time period represented here.

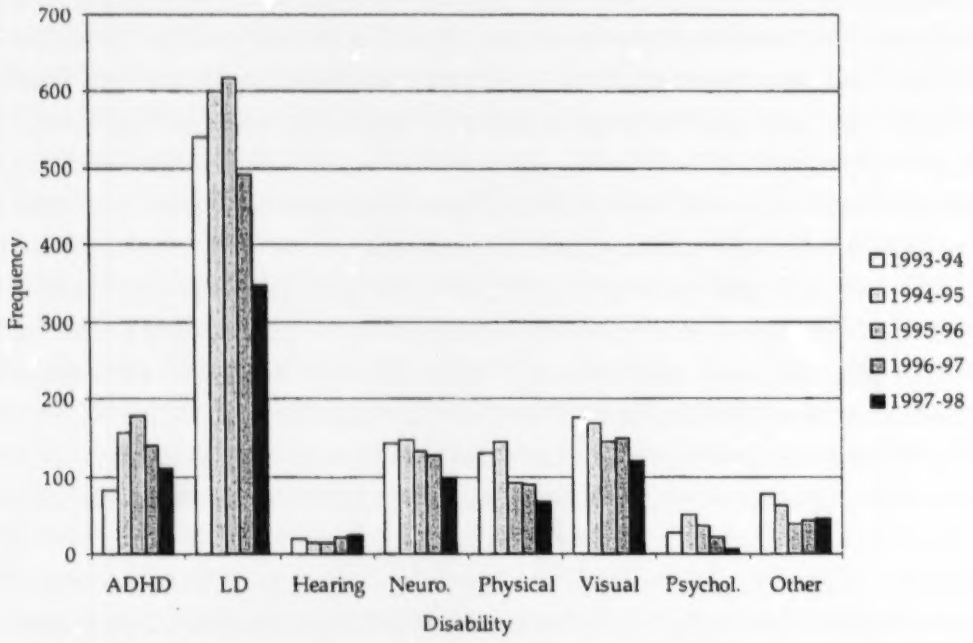

FIGURE 2. *Number of approved accommodation requests by disability and testing year*

Types of Accommodations

As described previously, accommodated testing conditions are tailored to meet the needs of the individual disabled LSAT taker. One way in which the needs of disabled LSAT takers are accommodated is through the use of special LSAT test booklet formats. In addition to the standard-type test booklet, Braille, Cassette, and Large-Type formats are available. Figure 3 summarizes the number of accommodations granted and the number of LSATs administered using each of these test formats. This figure demonstrates that most testing accommodations granted required only the standard LSAT test booklet. The majority of those who were granted an accommodation using the standard and large-type test booklets actually went on to take the test under accommodated conditions, while the majority of those granted accommodations using the cassette and Braille test formats never went on to take an accommodated test.

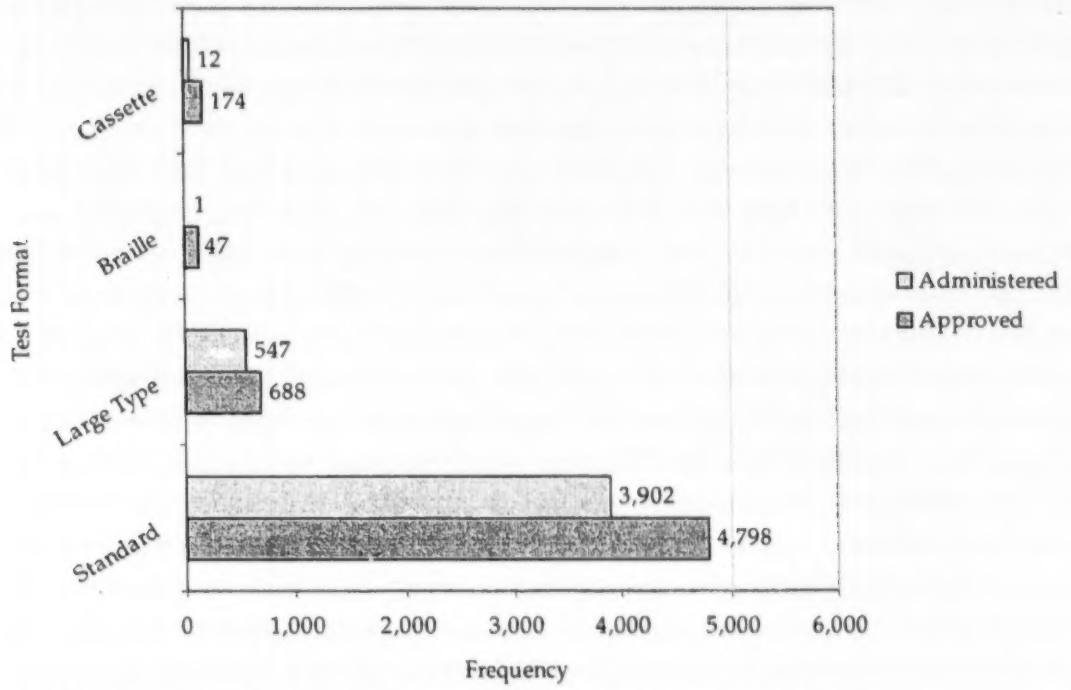

FIGURE 3. *Number of accommodated tests approved and administered by test format*

Figure 4 summarizes the various types of accommodations granted by testing year. Extra rest time, extra testing time, the use of a separate testing room, and the category of "other" (these are generally small accommodations, such as the use of a seat cushion or permission to take food or drink into the testing room) were the most common accommodations over the time period covered by this report, with the frequency of all of these accommodations decreasing over time. Extra rest time started off as the most common accommodation, but trailed off to fourth by the 1997–1998 testing year. A separate testing room was a very frequent accommodation over the entire time period covered, as was the other accommodation category. Extra testing time was common over all five testing years covered, with this accommodation granted for between 610 (1997–1998) and 1,104 (1994–1995) test takers. The use of a table, a large-type answer sheet, an amanuensis, a reader, and a wheelchair accessible room were granted infrequently for all five testing years.

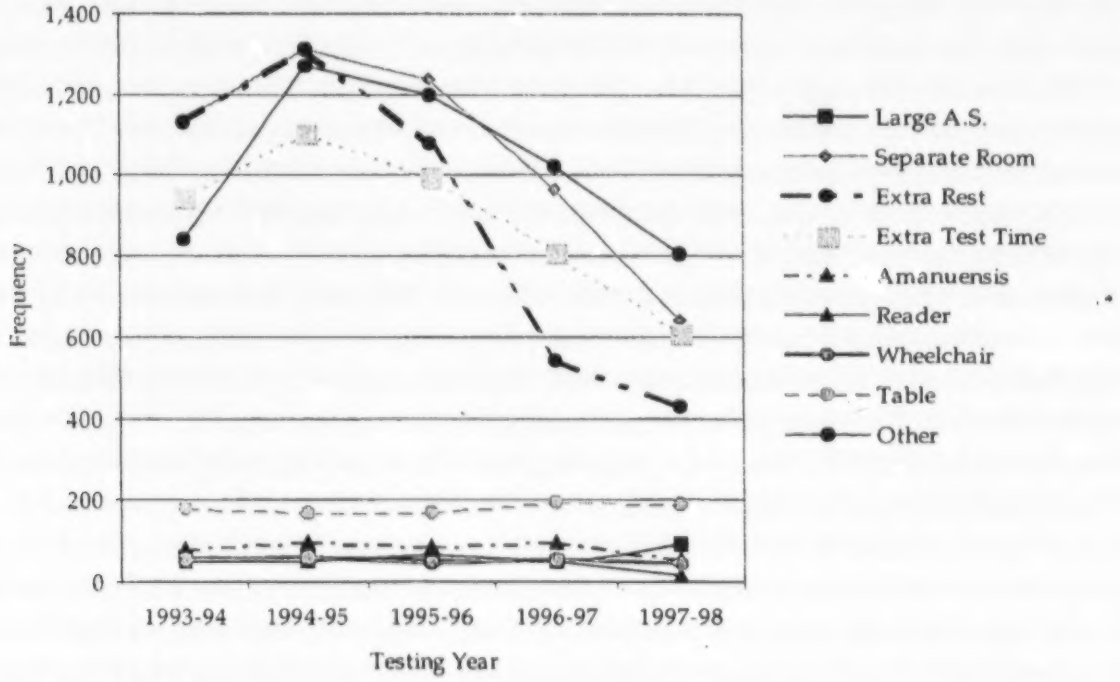

FIGURE 4. *Frequency of approved accommodated testing requests by testing year*

Amount of Extra Testing Time Granted and Used

A standard nonaccommodated LSAT is comprised of four scored multiple-choice sections and one unscored multiple-choice section that is used to try out test items before they are given operationally. Test takers are given 35 minutes per section under standard timing conditions. After completing the multiple-choice sections, test takers are given 30 minutes, under standard timing conditions, to complete a writing sample that is not scored, but is forwarded to any law schools that the test taker may apply to.

For the Accommodated/Extra Time test takers, Figure 5 summarizes the amount of extra testing time granted for the multiple-choice sections and Figure 6 summarizes the amount of testing time granted for the writing sample. For both the multiple-choice sections and the writing sample, double testing time (70 minutes per multiple-choice section and 60 minutes for the writing sample) was the most frequent time extension granted until the June 1996 administration, and time and a half (53 minutes per multiple-choice section and 45 minutes for the writing sample) was the most frequent time extension granted from October 1996 on. Greater than doubled testing time and less than time and a half were also granted to some extent, but a definite trend toward granting less rather than more testing time clearly emerges from this graph. As described with regard to the approval of accommodation requests, this trend corresponds directly with LSAC changes in the administration of testing accommodations. (Note: The letters J, O, D, and F in the x-axis labels in figures 5, 6, 7, and 11 denote the LSAT administration months of June, October, December, and February, respectively.)

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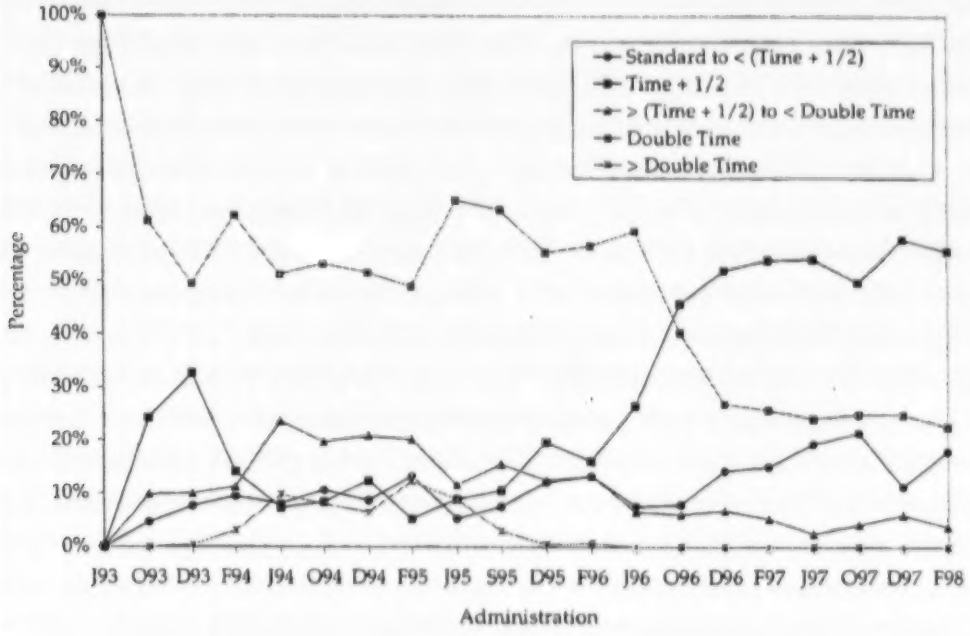

FIGURE 5. *Time granted for multiple choice sections*

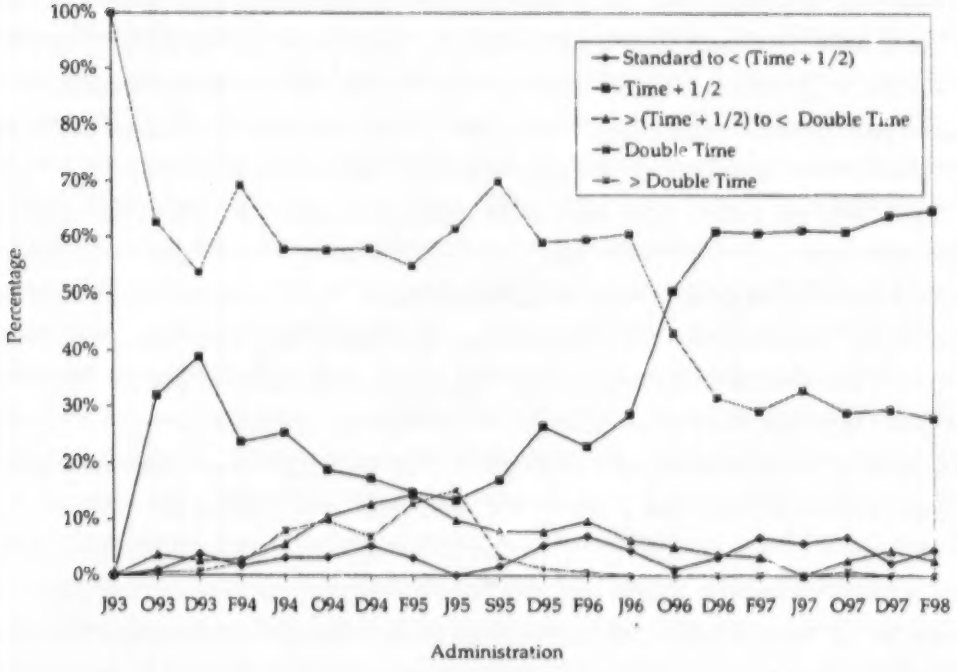

FIGURE 6. *Time granted for writing sample*

Figure 7 presents, by administration, the average difference between testing time granted and testing time used in the multiple-choice sections and the writing sample for Accommodated/Extra Time test takers. Positive differences in this figure indicate the average number of minutes that these test takers had left over after completing a test section. This figure indicates that Accommodated/Extra Time test takers tended to have enough time to complete each test section, and that the amount of time they had left over has decreased over time. These test takers tended to have more time left over after completing the writing sample than they did after completing the multiple-choice sections, but the amount of surplus time for the writing sample has also decreased. These results indicate that while accommodated LSAT takers were being granted less extra testing time in the later years covered by this research, they were often still being granted enough extra testing time to allow them to complete the test.

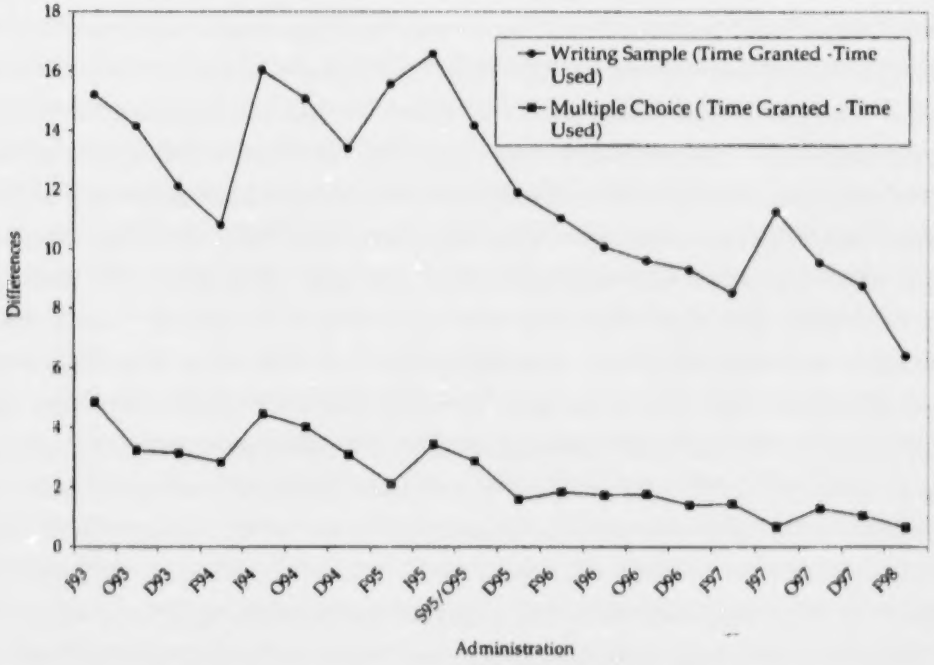

FIGURE 7. *Mean Differences between time granted and time used for multiple choice sections and the writing sample (time granted minus time used)*

Demographic Distribution

Figures 8 through 10 describe the distribution of the accommodated test taker sample among gender, racial/ethnic, and age groupings, respectively. These figures are each based on the 4,462 accommodated test takers for whom an LSAT score was available. Note that the "no reponse" category is not shown on Figure 8 because there were only 5 test takers in the sample who did not report their gender. Figure 8 reveals that, with the exception of the Physical Disability and Other disability classifications, male accommodated test takers tended to outnumber female accommodated test takers. This is especially true for the ADHD, Learning Disabled, and Neurologically Disabled classifications. This trend is not consistent with the standard test taking population, for which male and female test takers tend to be fairly equally represented (Dalessandro, Anthony, and Reese, 2001).

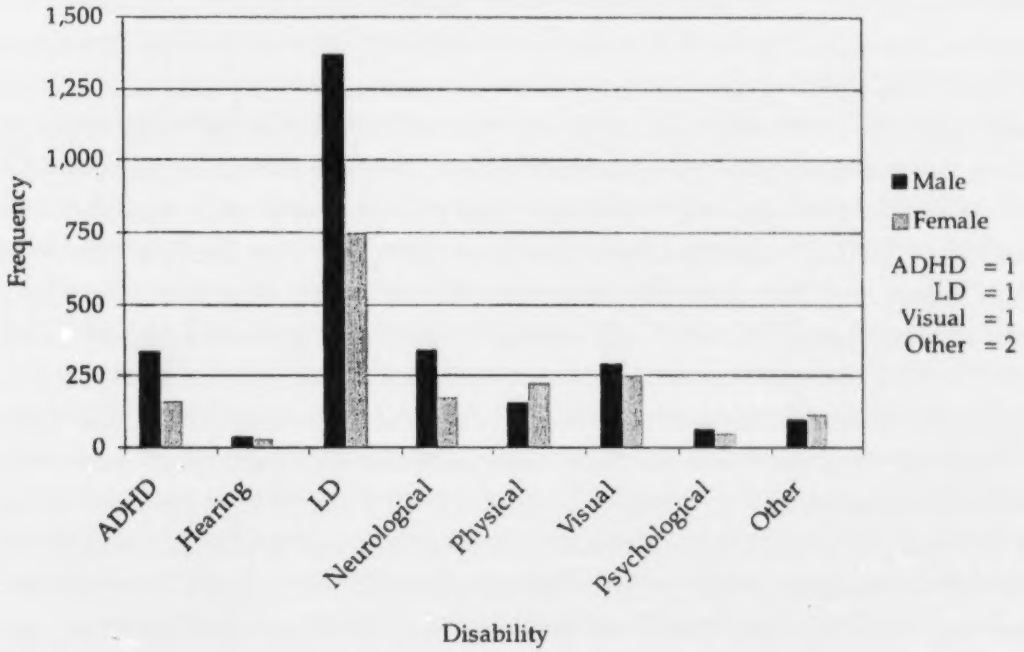

FIGURE 8. *Accommodated test takers categorized by gender and disability for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT administrations*

Figure 9 describes the racial/ethnic distribution of the accommodated test taker sample. Note that percentages rather than frequencies are reported in this figure because the data was easier to interpret in this format. Figure 9 reveals that the representation of the Caucasian subgroup was slightly higher for some of the disability categories than is typically observed for the standard test-taking population, with slightly lower representation for the Neurological, Physical, Visual, and Psychological disability categories. Between 66% and 70% of the standard test taking population typically report their race/ethnicity as Caucasian (Dalessandro, Anthony, and Reese, 2001). In general, there were fewer Asian American, African American, and Hispanic test takers in the sample analyzed here as compared to the standard test taking population. The exception to this was the representation of African American test takers among the Visual and Psychological disability categories, which was similar to the 12% typically observed for this group among the standard test taking population, and the representation of Hispanic test takers among the Learning Disabled disability category which was similar to the 4% typically observed for this group among the standard test taking population (Dalessandro, Anthony, and Reese, 2001). The representation of Canadian Aboriginal test takers among many of the disability categories was higher than that typically observed for the standard test taking population, with their highest representation being among the Neurological, Physical, and Visual disability categories.

Figure 10 provides the distribution of accommodated test takers within the various disability classifications across four age categories. This figure reveals that most of the test takers within the ADHD and Learning Disabled classifications tended to fall into the "below 23" age category, while there was a stronger tendency for accommodated test takers in the other disability classifications to fall into the older age categories. In general, this figure reveals a slight tendency for the accommodated test taking population to include a greater number of older test takers than is typical for the standard test taking population.

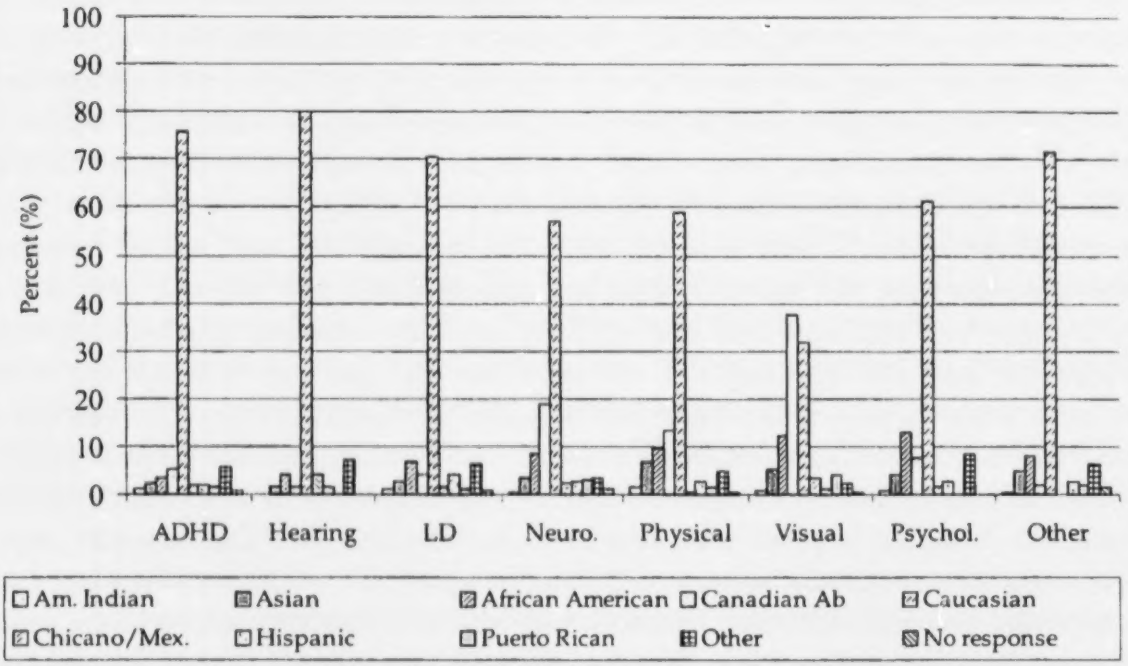

FIGURE 9. *Accommodated test takers categorized by ethnicity and disability for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT administrations*

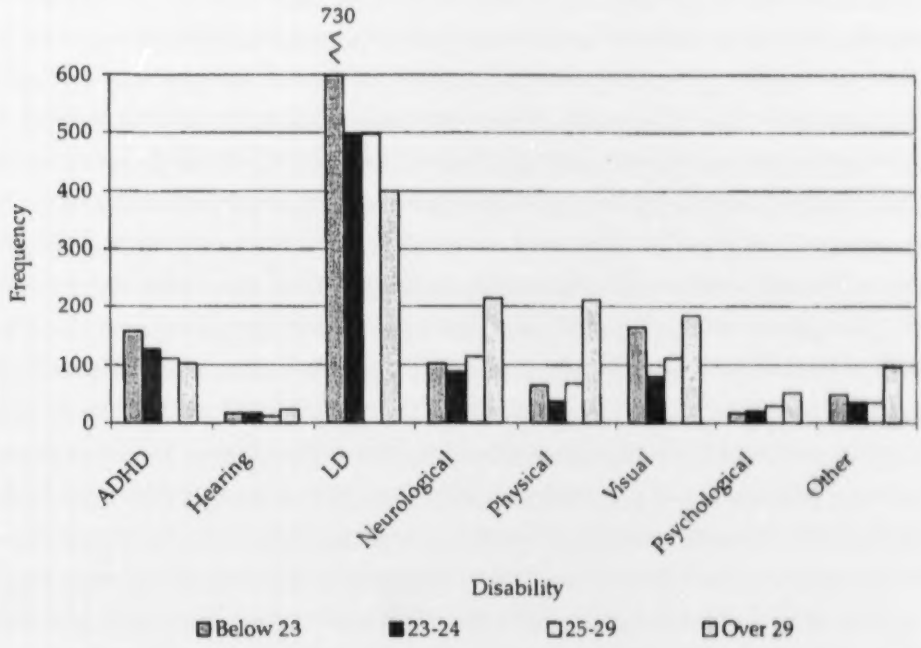

FIGURE 10. *Accommodated test takers categorized by age group and disability for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT administrations*

Performance of Accommodated LSAT Takers

For the 4,462 accommodated test takers for whom an LSAT score was available, these scores were compared to those of the standard LSAT-taking population. Figure 11 presents the mean LSAT score for the standard test taking population, Accommodated/Extra Time test takers, and Accommodated/Standard Time test takers for each administration included in this study. This figure reveals clearly that for the majority of LSAT administrations, Accommodated/Extra Time test takers tended to have higher LSAT scores than the standard LSAT-taking population, on average, while Accommodated/Standard Time test takers tended to have lower LSAT scores on average than the standard LSAT-taking population.

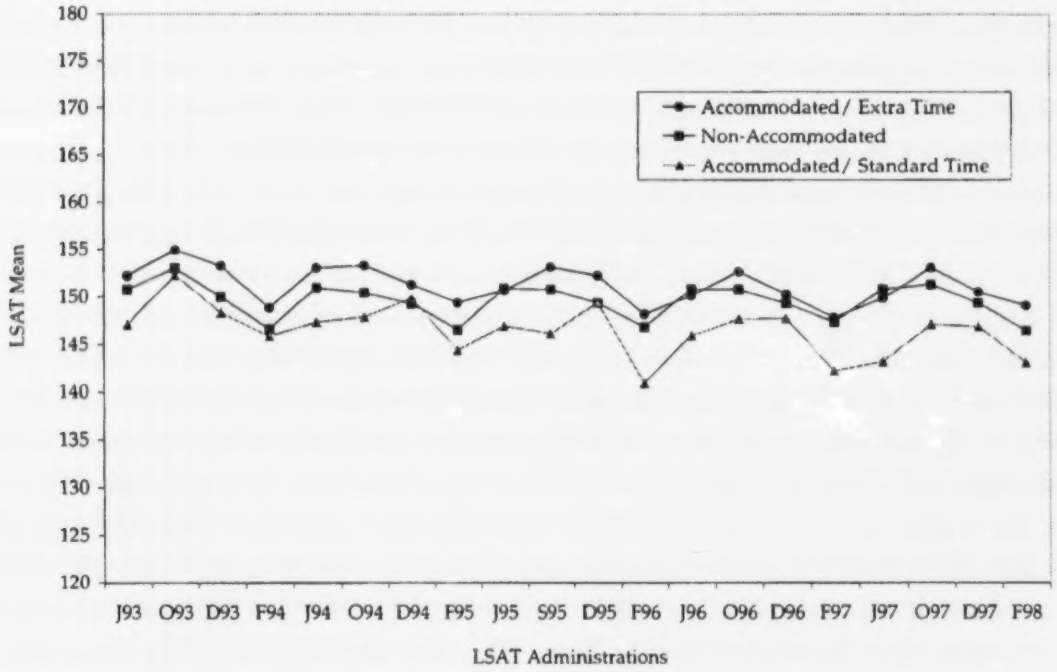

FIGURE 11. *Comparison of LSAT means*

Repeat Accommodated LSAT Takers

As is true for the standard LSAT-taking population, the performance of accommodated LSAT takers who chose to take the test more than once is of interest. Repeat accommodated test takers may be divided into three categories: those who took more than one accommodated test, those who first took an accommodated test and then switched to standard test taking conditions, and those who took the test under standard test taking conditions and then switched to accommodated test taking conditions. While accommodated test takers may choose to take the LSAT not only a second time, but also a third, fourth, or even fifth time, the number of accommodated test takers who tested more than twice was very small. Therefore, only two-time test takers are discussed here. The number of test takers who switched from accommodated to standard test taking conditions was also too small to allow for reasonable interpretation, so that group has not been included in these analyses.

From the 1993–1994 through 1997–1998 testing years, data were available for 228 test takers who tested twice under Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions and 334 test takers who first tested under standard test taking conditions and then tested a second time under Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions. Note that two-time test takers who cancelled either of their LSAT scores have been excluded from these analyses. Figure 12 presents frequency distributions of the mean score gains (and losses) for the two groups of two-time LSAT takers being analyzed. This figure reveals that those who switched from standard to Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions exhibited greater score gains than those who tested twice under Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions. The average score gain for two-time Accommodated/Extra Time test takers was 3.53 scaled score points, which is nearly one point higher than the 2.7 point gain typically observed for the standard test taking population (Duffy, Dalessandro, Anthony, & Swygert, 2001). The average score gain for those who switched from standard to Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions was much higher at 8.49 scaled score points.

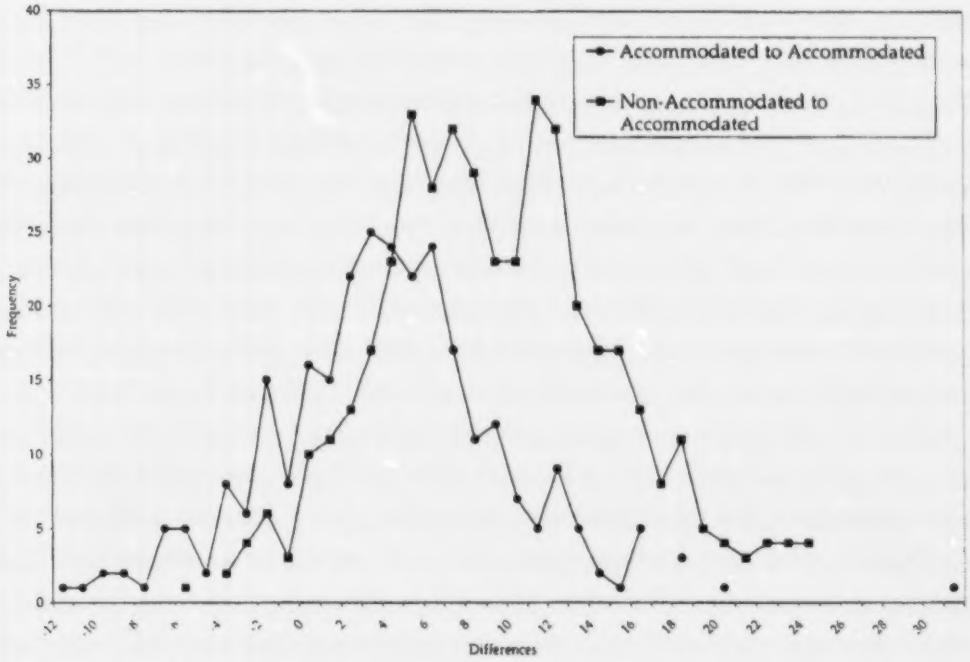

FIGURE 12. *LSAT mean differences for two-time test takers*

Summary

This report examined trends and performance for Accommodated test takers for the June 1993 through February 1998 LSAT administrations. Trends with regard to the request and approval of testing accommodations were examined, as well as the demographic make-up of the accommodated test taking population. Overall performance of accommodated LSAT takers was examined and compared to the standard test taking population, and the performance of accommodated test takers who repeated the test a second time was also studied.

In general, it was observed that the number of accommodation requests submitted by disabled LSAT takers has increased over the time period covered here, while the number of accommodations granted has declined. The former represents a change in test taker behavior, while the later relates, at least in part, to LSAC administrative changes with regard to the approval of accommodation requests. One very interesting observation with regard to the granting of accommodations was that while the amount of extra testing time granted has decreased over time, the results presented here indicate that accommodated test takers are, by and large, being granted sufficient time for them to complete the sections of the LSAT.

With regard to the distribution of accommodated test takers among various demographic groups, this group was in some ways similar to and in some ways different from the standard test taking population. Male test takers were more prevalent among the group of accommodated test takers than is typically observed for the standard test taking population. There was also a larger representation of accommodated test takers among the older age categories than is typically observed for the standard test taking population.

Trends with regard to LSAT performance for accommodated test takers has been very consistent, with those testing with extra testing time scoring higher than the standard test taking population and those testing with accommodations that did not include extra testing time scoring lower than the standard test taking population. Gain scores for accommodated test takers were somewhat higher than those observed for the standard test taking population, especially for those who first tested under standard test taking conditions and then switched to Accommodated/Extra Time testing conditions.

The trends presented in this report are purely descriptive in nature. While trends with regard to the accommodated test taking population have been described and compared to the standard test taking population, the explanation of the underlying causes of any differences observed is beyond the scope of this report. In particular, those included in the sample of accommodated test takers being analyzed are, in several respects, self-selected. These test takers chose to take the LSAT and to apply for accommodated testing conditions, and then further self-reported their group membership with regard to such factors as gender, race/ethnicity, and age.

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